

Leadership Report (Peter Cheyne)

The looming senior leadership challenge

Leadership is an increasingly crucial topic. We have not yet found a Senior Pastor. Gareth will retire at the end of 2027, and Peter will finish not long after that. Within SHFT, Nick, Jan and Emma will all finish at the end of this year. What does the future look like?

Moving Forward

For some time, the elders and staff have been questioning whether God is asking churches to put more emphasis on raising up leaders. It seems few denominations have sufficient people offering for traditional pastor training. Considering that, the elders have made a decision to focus on intentional leadership development. We still have the Ministry Settlement Board. They might find someone, but, if not, we want a second string to our bow. And, we should be raising up leaders anyway.

Staff and Elders

Personnel

We have had no changes in the staff or eldership in the last year.

I am full of admiration, and very grateful, for the people I work with.

Retreat

In January, the staff and elders held a retreat, specifically to consider how we make disciples. That followed having read, and discussed, the book *One Eighty* by Jeff Vanderstelt throughout 2025.

We were of one mind concerning the way ahead. There is more in the Discipleship report.

Hope (Christchurch) visit

Some of the staff (both E.T. and SHFT) visited Hope Presbyterian Church in Hornby, Christchurch in March, 2026. Hope is a church of a similar ethos to East Taieri but considerably larger. They were every welcoming and willing to help. We were able to discuss a number of the issues mentioned elsewhere in these reports (and have some good bonding time together).

Core Ministry Teams

Please see the comments in the introductory report "From Peter". The establishment of Core Ministry Teams is a significant change in our leadership structure.

Other Leaders

There is a list elsewhere in these reports of the groups and ministries within the church and what CMT they belong to.

That list also reveals how much is happening and how many other people there are leading and ministering in various ways. We are incredibly grateful. We have a lot of people serving and the church is richer for it.

Having said that, we sometimes feel that while people are very willing to serve, it is harder finding people willing to lead. For our part, we want to make sure that all leaders are well-supported.

Moving Forward

Priorities include:

- Developing a leadership pipeline (i.e. intentional leadership development)
- Providing leadership opportunities and training, including mentoring
- An expectation that all leaders will have an apprentice.

Strategic Planning

We do not currently have a strategic plan. That does not mean we are directionless. We do have “priority projects”, namely:

- The building project
- Intentional disciple-making. See the Discipleship report.
- The leadership questions mentioned above (Core Ministry Teams and new senior leadership)
- Extending our youth ministries to accommodate growing numbers of Christian young people
- Making our communications more effective
- Researching and implementing the use of AI where that is genuinely helpful and ethical

And there are always other things that crop up.

Moving Forward

We want to develop an easy-to-use but robust strategic planning process to coordinate planning across the church, give ourselves targets and inform our decisions and budget.

Discipleship Report (Peter Cheyne)

The “Grow in Christ” part of our mission statement is largely about our own spiritual growth, our discipleship. As a church, we want to help people grow.

Intentional Disciple-making

During 2025, the staff and elders read, and discussed the book *One Eighty* by Jeff Vanderselt. In February 2026, we had a retreat to identify the lessons that were helpful to us. The result was a framework explaining our understanding of disciple-making. That framework has been put onto a website (<https://sites.google.com/view/et-disciples>) so that we can all be on the same page.

In part, intentionality includes a general understanding that our mission is to make disciples, and a general understanding of what they means.

Ministry Conference

Ministry Conference this year looked at three topics closely related to disciple-making. I talked about disciple-making, Gareth talked about models for disciple-making small groups,

and Stu Crosson talked about growing leaders. That provided another opportunity for us to clarify our thinking as well as possibly help others. There are links to recordings of those talks on the resources page of the above website.

Life Groups

The elders and staff felt we should focus our efforts on our existing Life Groups initially. Disciples are made in all sorts of contexts (mentoring relationships, to a limited extent, sermons, while serving together, etc.) but small groups are a key starting point.

We have lots of different groups all of which are valuable. For some, their primary purpose is growing people as disciples. For others, it is fellowship, or ministering together. Those that have a primary purpose of making disciples we are calling “Life Groups”.

If Life Groups are key, then Life Group leaders are also key. We are very grateful for those people who serve week after week

The Life Group leaders asked that we profile their groups on our website. Some are at maximum numbers but others are keen to have new members. There is information now on <https://etchurch.co.nz>. Check it out if you are interested, or talk to Nick Muirhead.

Moving Forward

In the past, Life Groups have largely done their own thing. To some extent now we want to coordinate them a bit more so that there is a focus on making disciples. There are principles that we want to see increasingly embedded into the thinking of Life Groups.

We have had one meeting of Life Group leaders recently introducing the concepts. Over time, we will continue to think about the implementation of the principles which we have learnt from considering how Jesus made disciples.

Support and Resources

Moving Forward

We want to support the Life Groups and their leaders. That will include developing a curriculum. Making disciples is much more about relationships than it is about study materials, but there are still areas of learning that are important for any disciple. We want to develop a pathway for growth from not knowing Jesus through to spiritual maturity, service, and raising up the next generation of disciples. We want people to know what their next step might be, and we want to resource that growth.

The Life Group leaders have requested a chat group where they can support each other and share resources.

Next Steps

“Next Steps” was a learning from Hope Presbyterian Church in Hornby. People can go to a webpage and indicate that they want to take a particular next step in their growth (e.g. baptism, or joining a small group). As well, leaders of all groups are expected to have “next step” conversations with the people in their group to understand what a next growth step might be and then help that person take that step.

The Discipleship Core Ministry Team

If you have an interest in seeing people grow to become more like Jesus, and you are willing to help others know how to make disciples, do you want to be part of this team?